

AN

3

INTRODUCTORY LECTURE

DELIVERED AT

The London Hospital

M E D I C A L S C H O O L,

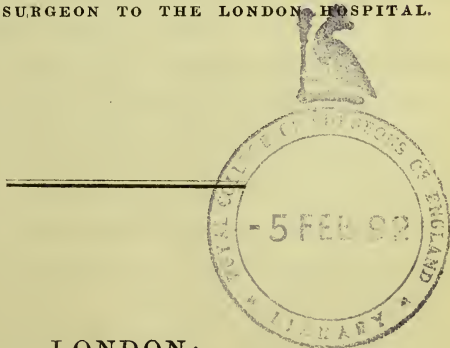
AT THE COMMENCEMENT OF SESSION 1847-8.

BY

GEORGE CRITCHETT, F.R.C.S.E.

LECTURER ON PRACTICAL ANATOMY,


AND ASSISTANT-SURGEON TO THE LONDON HOSPITAL.



LONDON:

PRINTED FOR PRIVATE CIRCULATION.

1847.



Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2015

<https://archive.org/details/b22274984>



INTRODUCTORY LECTURE.

WHEN the Persian monarch, satiated with every luxury that could minister either to a healthy or depraved appetite, and having taxed his inventive powers in vain, to find some new stimulus for his benumbed and palsied senses, called upon his courtiers to open up some fresh well-spring of sensual pleasure, difficult as was such a task, he did not dwell so largely upon the inventive faculties of his followers as would those gentlemen who have honoured me with their presence to-day, were they to expect me to lead their minds into some new domain of thought and feeling.

It has now been the custom, in the different medical schools, for so many successive years, to commence the session with an introductory lecture; so many of the greatest minds that our profession can boast have summoned up all their powers to give vigour and freshness to these initiatory efforts, that I painfully feel my inadequacy to follow such men; and having undertaken this task at the

request of my colleagues, I must throw myself on your kind indulgence during its feeble and imperfect accomplishment.

It is curious to note some of the varied modes in which the study of medicine has been ushered into the presence of students. Some have ransacked the old and musty records of the past, and have left no historical nook unsearched, to trace out the remotest traditions of our art, when yet, in the infancy of mundane Time, it was the handmaid of priestcraft and sorcery, and have tracked it on its dubious way, until it grew into its present dimensions, and took its rank among the learned professions and the liberal sciences. The relative claims of medicine and surgery, the duties of medical students and of medical men, the nature and extent of the preliminary education necessary for our profession, and an account of the newest scientific discoveries, have each been enlisted in the service of introductory lectures; and, gentlemen, could I only present you with the gleanings from such an annual harvest of eloquence, and mould them into form, what an essence of deep thought, brilliant imagery, and keen wit, might be expected at my hands; but even were I equal to the task, I should shrink from such a wholesale act of mental piracy.

In selecting a subject, I feel like some student suddenly plunged into the midst of a copious library, with the accumulated wisdom of ages

piled up around him: his senses are dazzled and perplexed by the flood of light thus pouring down upon him from all sides; in the midst of such an intellectual Paradise he knows not what fruit to choose, and wearied with pursuing the thoughts of others, he takes refuge in his own; or, as one of our poets has finely expressed this sentiment,—

“ Thus, as a hunted deer that could not flee,
I turned upon my thoughts and stood at bay.”

And, in truth, I feel, that however poor and feeble the effort may be on my part, it is only by falling back on my own thoughts, by presenting you with my own genuine feelings and opinions, that I shall most honestly fulfil the task entrusted to me.

I believe every one feels, more or less, that he has some message to deliver to his fellow men; some thoughts that may have been dimly floating through his mind, which he has felt to be his own; or if some have been originally caught from another, they have found so responsive an echo in his own breast—they have so exactly vibrated in harmony with his own feelings, that they have insensibly become a part of himself; such thoughts, imperfect, ill-arranged, chaotic, though they be, it is my desire to mould into form, and to embody in my present address. In carrying out this intention, I have proposed to myself to lay before you a sort of camera-obscura view, a kind of daguerreotype representation of the profession you have adopted,

the nature of its early studies, its rewards, its tendencies, and its trials.

In the very dawn of your medical education you are made acquainted with many branches of science, deeply interesting in themselves, and still more so in their bearing upon the general study of medicine. If you would enjoy the character of an enlightened practitioner, you must become thoroughly imbued with all that is known respecting the laws that govern the organic and the inorganic world. It is most desirable that you acquire a knowledge of the various agents that influence the human body in health and disease, the phenomena of the imponderable agents, light, heat, and electricity, fraught, as they are, with intense interest to every inquiring mind ; of the fixed laws that regulate the combining powers of inorganic matter, and of the structure and physiology of the vegetable kingdom. "Here curiosity is ever excited, attention riveted, and memory bribed, by perpetual variety, novelty, and beauty. The comparing power is ever kept alive by an endless succession of similitudes and contrasts, that awaken the flagging attention by renewed excitement and gratification of the senses ; and as the student watches the ascension of nature into mind, he learns that up the whole ascent, nature is a prophetic hymn, heralding the advent of man." *

* Green's Hunterian Oration.

These studies will comprise Lectures upon Chemistry, Materia Medica, and Botany, which will be delivered by gentlemen whose names could borrow no additional lustre from any words of mine, but are identified with the sciences they teach and adorn.

Here I must be permitted to digress for a few moments, to pay a brief but sincere tribute to the memory of our late Botanical Lecturer, who has been suddenly taken from us, in the very prime of life, and in the midst of an active and useful professional career.

Mr. EDWIN QUECKETT was a true lover of Science; he followed her in her most flowery path; he most successfully unravelled some of her workings, through the agency of the microscope; and many of the results of his scientific labours may be seen in the valuable botanical preparations he has liberally bequeathed to our Museum: he combined all those talents that can most distinguish and adorn a member of our profession. Let those amongst us who admire high moral qualities, great scientific attainments, and sound practical knowledge, esteem his memory and imitate his example.

Combined with these auxiliary sciences, the student must strive to obtain an early and a thorough acquaintance with the wondrous and beautiful mechanism of the human body—its general and intricate structure and organization,

and the laws of organic life. This comprehends the sciences of Anatomy and Physiology—a correct knowledge of which lies at the very root of every good medical education. The study of other branches of science connected with your profession may be pursued after you quit these walls; but to most of you the practical pursuit of Anatomy, by dissections, must cease when you commence the active duties of a medical man. It should, then, be studied diligently and practically; and though its details may seem dry and difficult, it amply repays the labour it costs, by the confidence it gives to the surgeon, and by the light it throws upon internal disease. Thus, by these Lectures are you introduced within the portals of the Temple of Science, filled with rich treasure,—its foundation laid upon inductive philosophy,—its walls built up by human intellect through successive ages,—its high turrets adorned by many of the greatest geniuses of the world: a temple which shelters and protects its true disciples, guards them from error, and displays before them the sacred altar of truth.

As you become acquainted with these preliminary branches of science, subjects more immediately connected with your profession are brought before your notice, and lectures are delivered on the theory and practice of medicine and surgery. But, gentlemen, do not for a moment imagine that your medical education, or even the most important part

of that education, is now complete, even though you may have mastered most of the valuable information contained in these lectures. A man commencing practice, and undertaking the treatment of some formidable disease with only the light of science and theory for his guide, would resemble some rash miner dashing into the dark recesses of a coal-pit with a blazing torch in his hand, ignorant of the hidden and mighty powers he sets in motion, and which may scatter dismay and ruin around him. But let the student supply himself with the "Davy lamp" of clinical observation and practical experience, and then, with this before him, and the light of science burning brightly within it, he may fearlessly and successfully penetrate into the obscure recesses of disease. If, then, gentlemen, you will only furnish the oil of industry and observation, I can promise, on the part of my colleagues, a constant emanation of scientific light, and I can point to our splendid hospital as abundantly supplying the Davy lamp of practical experience. Here, within the spacious wards, theory and practice go hand-in-hand; and by means of the valuable system of dresserships, the pupil is gradually enabled to investigate disease, and under the superintendence and guidance of the surgeon is made the immediate agent in its treatment.

In order still further to extract and disseminate the valuable materials contained within this rich

storehouse of medical and surgical experience, a Society was last year instituted, or rather, I should say, remodelled, consisting of the physicians and surgeons of the hospital, of several of the students, and of such of the practitioners in the neighbourhood as have felt disposed to join us. Meetings are held at stated periods within these walls, and any interesting cases that may have occurred at the hospital, or in the practice of any member of the Society, are read and discussed, and morbid specimens of any interesting post-mortems that may have occurred between the meetings are exhibited; and I assure you our table here occasionally groans with the various dishes thus displayed before us. It has been said by some old writer, that "reading makes a full man; writing, a correct man; and speaking, a ready man." In such a Society these elements are brought into exercise. The meetings I have attended have been both interesting and instructive, and I would strongly urge all who are desirous of obtaining practical information, and of acquiring a facility in expressing their sentiments, to join it.

I cannot here pass over in silence the liberal conduct of the committee of our hospital: desirous of evincing the warm interest they take in the prosperity of our school, and deeply sensible of the mutual advantage derived from diligent attendance and humane conduct on the part of the pupils, they have

offered for competition, annually, two gold medals—one to the most attentive clinical student in the physician's wards, and the other to the most meritorious surgical pupil. I hail this recognition, on the part of the committee, of a community of interests between the medical school and the hospital, with heartfelt delight, as an acknowledgment of a great and important principle. I rejoice that this splendid monument of British benevolence limits not its blessings to its own immediate vicinity, or to the sufferers sheltered and cared for within its walls, but by offering a concentration of medical and surgical experience to every student of this school, is mainly instrumental in sending them forth into the world practically qualified for their profession; thus realizing the idea of some noble river, which not only enriches its own banks as it flows majestically onwards, but gives moisture to the clouds of heaven, that they may pour down their fertilizing showers over the length and breadth of the land. I have now, gentlemen, filled up that section of my picture which belongs to the pupilage of the medical man; I must pass on to the life that awaits him when he enters upon the active duties of his profession.

In this country, where wealth exerts so wide an influence, and gives so prominent and artificial a position in society, it becomes a legitimate and interesting inquiry to us all, to what extent ours can be

regarded as a lucrative pursuit. I believe it will be admitted, that, with occasional exceptions, every intelligent, well-qualified practitioner is able to move in the rank of a gentleman; but yet it must be conceded, that if the acquirement of wealth be the leading principle in your minds, you have chosen badly. In the vast machinery of this country you may doubtless find some readier mode of acquiring riches; but I will not believe that the young and aspiring students I see around me, will on this account slacken in the race, or abate one jot of their enthusiasm. It should be one of our special functions to make a stand against this growing idolatry in our land; to exhibit to mankind that there are other, and higher, and nobler aims, to engage the energies of a human soul, than the mere acquisition of wealth; that, with the beautiful panorama of Nature and of Science spread out before them,—with so much that can give exercise to the intellect, the imagination, and the heart,—the question of money must not be allowed to occupy too prominent a place in our minds: we must show that man should not live for wealth alone, but rather to work out the important destinies of his nature, to fill up his link in the chain of humanity, to give play to the talents, the energies, and the moral feelings that constitute his identity as a sentient being, and that give him an influence for good or for evil over mankind.

We might learn a useful lesson in this respect from some of our continental professors, whose interesting researches have shed light over the scientific world. We find them living cheerfully and contentedly upon a pittance which in England would be deemed a bare subsistence. I own this, to me, is a most interesting and instructive picture; a fine example of the triumph of mind over external circumstances. It realizes the Diogenes in his tub, looking with indifference at the fortune even of a triumphant emperor in the plenitude of his mental independence, and wringing from the proud prince, even in the meridian glories of his brilliant career, a confession of admiration, nay, almost of envy: "If I were not Alexander, I would be Diogenes." The immortal JOHN HUNTER, the result of whose almost miraculous labours first raised our profession to the dignity of an inductive science, has been heard to lament, when compelled to break off in the midst of his important researches to earn a fee; and the great ABERNETHY, who was a worthy successor of this mighty genius, nobly declined to answer even the summons of his prince, until he had fulfilled his duty, and delivered his lecture to his expectant pupils. On the other hand, many of our finest intellects have been cramped by the engrossing allurements of a lucrative practice, and their early promise nipped in the bud by the blighting patron-

age of fashion. Of how many such may we not say, slightly altering the words of one of our English bards, that they,

“Born for a universe, narrow’d their mind,

And to Mammon gave up what was meant for mankind.”

Then, again, it may be asked,—If the reward of the medical man is not to be sought in the emoluments of his profession, is he compensated by the prospect of one day obtaining worldly honours? Again it must be admitted that the high functions of the legislature are not within his reach—that the portals of rank and power, whilst they are open to the talented of the other liberal professions, are for ever closed upon him. But though his influence is less prominently seen, it is not the less sensibly felt—it pervades the family circle; for when he is able, by arresting some fearful disease, to bind up those ties which were wellnigh wrenched asunder—to restore a parent, upon whose life hung the well-being of a family; or a child, to whom the parent clung as if the very heart-strings must burst asunder if that child were torn away—the medical man obtains an influence as great as it is lasting. Whilst he soothes bodily pain he sometimes allays mental anguish; often in the hour of deepest trial, when grief and dismay paralyze the faculties, the same mind that has ministered to the sick and dying, calms and advises the living; the confidence which professional skill and humane conduct has engen-

dered spreads over a still wider sphere; and amid the chaos which some mighty loss has occasioned, when the mind, which was once the bright leading-star of a circle, has been hurled from its orbit into confusion and night, the medical man restores order, smoothes the troubled waters, and advises the enfeebled mind; and, in truth, if this be done honourably and purely, it is one of the highest and holiest functions that can warm a human heart, or engage the efforts of a human soul, and gives in its sphere a wider influence, a more complete control, than the most powerful monarch in the wildest dreams of ambition ever hoped for. Nor is this all; our profession takes a still wider range. Though the honours and emoluments of place and power belong not to its members, they are at this time exercising a wide-spread influence over the teeming population of this country; it is to them belongs the praise of pointing out the fearful social evils resulting from crowding together breathing masses of humanity—from defective drainage and imperfect ventilation—from heaping up the dead among the living, and infecting and fevering the atmosphere with the noxious vapours of corruption, making the churchyard and the charnelhouse supply its own victims, and be not alone a receptacle for the dead, but a mighty reservoir of disease for the living. It is by their heart-stirring reports that a nation has been awakened from its lethargy; by their scientific

researches and reiterated remonstrances, that a sluggish government has been roused into action, and sanitary reform has become an inevitable thing. They thus not only combat disease, but they prevent it; whilst they modify the effects, they check the cause; they turn a cleansing river into the Augean stables of our densely populated towns. With all the heroism of the champion, and, alas! too often with all the fatal devotion of the martyr, have some of the brightest ornaments of our profession pursued their untiring labours amid the ravages of contagious fever; and as they have unmasked its causes and suggested the remedy, they seem to realize much of the glory of the prophet of old, when he stood between the living and the dead, and stayed the progress of the destroying angel as he swept through the armies of Israel.

Such is a brief and imperfect sketch of the outward life of a medical man, his duties and his rewards. It is no less interesting and important, to inquire how far the pursuits of our art are in harmony with his internal nature, and are calculated to bring the various mental properties of man into active exercise. I have neither time nor ability to enter into the abstruse question of the component elements of the human mind, but it will be admitted, that the constituent parts present as great a variety, in their form and expression, as do the outward features of man; and it will appear evident, as I

think, that whatever mental faculty or endowment be specially prominent or active, no profession is so calculated as our own to afford an ample and useful field for its exercise, and to give to the entire mental constitution ever-varying nourishment and occupation. Should your talent lie in tracing out the infinitely beautiful and minute arrangements of organic life in health and disease, what a new world of intense interest the microscope opens up; what a mine of hidden wealth is thus revealed! Nature is questioned in her most secret recesses, in the very laboratory of her cunning works, and she reveals to the patient and acute observer the beauty of her arrangements and the wonders of her laws.

It will be a proud thing if you are able to place yourselves among the modern discoverers in this branch of science, and it may cheer you on to reflect, that if a flood of light has been poured upon us from this source, a large tract of undiscovered country still remains, where the young aspirant may win for himself scientific honours; and when I remind you that you will be marshalled on in the pursuit by such an eminent and successful microscopic inquirer as Dr. CARPENTER, and by such a careful and promising investigator as Dr. PARKER, you will feel that you enter on the task under the brightest auspices.

Every outward sense—the eye, the ear, the touch—may be perfected by practice, and most

profitably enlisted in the service of your profession. A mechanical talent finds abundant opportunities of displaying itself; of this we have a striking example in the many simple and useful mechanical contrivances with which our eminent and practical surgeon, Mr. LUKE, has enriched our hospital, and surgery in general.

If you have the power of classifying facts, and arranging and drawing inferences from extensive combinations, there is no profession in which such a talent could produce such splendid results. We may imagine such a mind grappling with each refractory fact, bringing them, one after the other, under the dominion of some harmonious law, until it has subdued the last fibre of organization, and brought in the very outskirts of nature.

Thus it is that from the very first moment you enter upon your profession to the last case you prescribe for, the mental powers are ever kept alive; new facts have to be treasured up, sifted, and reasoned upon; every new discovery has to be tested; fresh and rare combinations of morbid phenomena will keep the inventive and imaginative faculties at work, and in whatever direction your intellect may be most active and strong, there, amid the endless ramifications of the profession, will you find abundant materials whereon to display your powers.

But, further, it is interesting to consider what

influence our profession exercises upon the mental and moral constitution of its members. The result of daily observation may convince us, that the education a man has received, and the profession he has adopted, give form to the plastic materials of which the youthful mind is made up, and stamp their own individuality and character upon the malleable metal of young thought and feeling, and this impress, thus indurated around him by time and habit, becomes a part of his eternal nature. If this be so, what are the effects of the study and practice of our art upon the mind of its possessor, upon his mode of thought and feeling; and what will be the image and superscription stamped upon the moral and intellectual man? In our profession, the evils of disobeying the moral laws of our nature are brought out in bold relief, and are impressed with fearful distinctness upon our attention. We learn that what is commonly called pleasure, when it depends upon the mere excitement of one mental faculty, must soon terminate in lassitude and ennui; that there is no departure from the healthy and legitimate functions of nature, no undue indulgence of sensual feeling, that does not bring with it its corresponding punishment. Suffering and disease are continually trumpeting forth to us their high lessons of morality, and writing in indelible characters upon our hearts and minds the hideousness of vice.

The discipline which the intellect undergoes in the study and pursuit of our profession, gives health and vigour to the reason and judgment, and weakens the influence of the imagination; it breaks down some of the false barriers which an artificial condition of society has set up. Accustomed not merely to see the puppet-show as it is enacted before the world, but to get behind the scenes and find out the strings that move it, we learn to distinguish between mere show and real worth, between cant and genuine truth: brought into the closest intercourse with every phase of society, and at a time when the inmost recesses of the mind are laid bare, we find that virtue and merit does not pervade any particular stratum of society, to the exclusion of others; we learn to estimate mankind rather for the intrinsic worth of their nature than for the opinions they may entertain. Accustomed to weigh facts, and only to draw inferences from legitimate data, we are preserved from hollow scepticism on the one hand, and from blind credulity on the other. The infinite wisdom and goodness of the Creator blazes out before us at every turn, and is written upon our mind as with a sunbeam: and as we often find the highest moral qualities and mental endowments exhibited by men of every shade of opinion, we are raised above all narrow prejudice and sectarian feeling; and wherever we meet with religious reverence, loyalty, a high tone of gentlemanly feeling, active

benevolence, and sound judgment, we do not stay to question under what banner a man may fight, or what regimentals he may wear; we hail in him a fine specimen of Nature's noblest work, and we are proud to welcome him as a friend and a brother.

But, gentlemen, I should perform my task unfairly were I to omit altogether the gloomier side of the picture, and say nothing of the hindrances and discouragements from within and from without that beset the path of the medical man.

It must be admitted, that one of the most trying circumstances connected with the practice of his profession is to be found in a painful consciousness of the insufficiency of his resources to control some of the most formidable diseases that flesh is heir to. It becomes often his mournful duty to wait upon some frightful and incurable malady, watch its desperate inroads, behold it as it immolates its victim, and yet be compelled to stand by powerless to save,—even the pleasing task of soothing pain is sometimes denied him,—and nothing seems left but the reflection, that as some diseases, once considered indomitable, have been from time to time brought under the dominion of our art, the glorious day may arrive when the power of medicine will surpass the utmost limits of disease. Nor must we forget, on the other hand, how numerous and how triumphant are the applications of science, both medical and surgical, to a great variety of diseases. Many

examples I could cite bear witness, trumpet-tongued, to the vast resources of our profession; whilst some new and brilliant discovery comes from time to time to cheer us onwards; and if, gentlemen, you can add one small link to the mighty chain of scientific discovery whereby one human pang is assuaged, or one human ill removed, when the high and the mighty ones of this earth shall have passed away,—when those upon whose voice a nation has hung with rapture, and a senate with admiration, shall have sunk into oblivion, the influence of that discovery will be felt and acknowledged by myriads yet unborn, and will extend its benefits from generation to generation.

But I think it must be admitted that the bitterest dregs in the cup which the medical man is compelled to quaff are to be found in the widely-spread influence of quackery—that many-headed monster, which assumes a new face at every turn. It is not alone that he finds his profession shaken to its centre by the heterodox opinions of some of its own members,—not alone that he sees masses of mankind deluded and led captive by the secret nostrums and low tricks of advertising charlatans,—but that which he has more deeply to deplore is the hollow manœuvring of some of his own brethren, the quiet sneer by which his acts are censured, the dishonesty with which the trifling malady is painted in hideous forms to enhance the estimate of the cure, the false

promises continually held out to the victims of incurable diseases, whose friends are kept hoping and paying on until the grave closes the wretched and degrading scene. It is this system of preying upon the weak side of humanity, whether it be found amongst the lowest and most ignorant pretenders, or amongst a class from whose position and endowments we might expect better things, that saps the very vitality of our profession, and that makes up the most hideous features of the monster called Quackery, or rather, I should say, monsters; for if it once seemed but as some great serpent which overspread our land, it is now severed into a thousand pieces, and, reptile-like, each fragment endued with a separate vitality, and a new form is found cursing and cursed in every corner of England.

Is there, then, no remedy for this widespread evil? If the records of the past and present are so gloomy, is there no hope for the future? Does it lie within the scope of human ingenuity to contrive any legislative enactment whereby quackery, even in its most obvious and glaring exhibitions, can be restrained? I fear that Government can do but little good in the matter; it might, perhaps, be possible to restrain the unqualified practitioner in openly ministering to the sick, but even this scarcely lies within the province of the legislature. Any effort to prescribe rules to the human mind when it feels a right to exercise private judgment,

however well intended, is generally followed by a strong re-action, and increases the evil it was meant to check. I believe the only effectual and lasting remedy is to be found in the improvement of our own body as a class, and the gradual growth of intelligence among the people. When we are more thoroughly and universally qualified in every branch of our art—when there is seen less of the spirit of trade, and more of the high and honourable feeling of the profession—when we are more united as a body, more convinced that an injury inflicted upon one of our members is a wound to the whole community—when we have accomplished these important changes, and the world has at the same time become better qualified to estimate merit, and to detect trickery and fraud, we may then hope that quackery will begin to shrink and dwindle; and though it may never cease from this earth so long as humanity retains its present features, it may lose much of its force and vitality, and may seem to resemble rather some relict of a bygone age; it may then be compared to those wondrous heaps of wasted toil and energy, the pyramids of Egypt, rearing their mighty heads in the desert, monuments of the folly of those who erected them, with the wild barren wilderness around them, and the mouldering remains of the dead within them.

I have now, gentlemen, endeavoured to give you a sketch of the studies, the rewards, the privileges,

and the discouragements of the profession in which you are embarked; and in surveying the varied occupations that engross the energies of man, it is my settled conviction that this, above all others, gives the most complete and healthy exercise to the human mind, and draws forth and gratifies the highest and noblest tendencies of the human soul. It is like the fabled tent, that would cover either one man or an army: there is no genius so exalted or so varied that may not find food for its highest soarings; no mediocrity that may not hope to develop itself into a useful and important member of the medical body. But, gentlemen, it will ever be found that high privileges entail upon the possessor arduous duties and deep responsibilities. If you would sit for the portrait I have endeavoured to draw, you must record against yourselves the sentence of hard labour for life. Not merely during your pupilage, but as long as you practise your profession, must you put forth all your best energies; labour must be the alpha and omega of your medical career. Would you have it otherwise?—would you prefer a life of ease?—then have you chosen badly, or rather, as I think, mistaken the very aims and ends of human existence. Perhaps some of you have looked with envy upon some favoured child of fortune, whose only care seems to be to enjoy from year to year the wealth that has been showered upon him, and have deemed his

lot far happier than your own. But, gentlemen, be not deceived by external glitter: the butterfly, with its gorgeous tints, which looks so beautiful as it flaps its wings in the summer sun, only soils the hand that grasps it; and the rainbow, which seems so magnificent in the distance, ere we can reach it has turned to tears; and if this man of wealth be not carrying on some work in this world of ours—if he be not labouring to advance us onwards in our progressive strivings—if he be throwing all his influence, and thought, and sympathy, into the mere outward artificialities of life, and is a mere seeker after pleasure and excitement,—then is he violating the fundamental laws of humanity; he is allowing his mental powers to rust out and decay, and often becomes a thing rather to pity than to envy. The necessity which urges you to labour may seem stern and hard, but it is like the steel against the rock—it forces the bright spark of talent from man's nature, and kindles up light and warmth where there seemed nothing but flinty barrenness.

The mandate has gone forth from the earliest dawn of mundane time—"By the sweat of man's brow shall man live;" it is embodied in his inmost nature, and woe be to him, be he prince or peasant, who disobeys it.

Gold is not found on the surface of our earth; and all that is most precious in the intellectual and

moral world must be dug for, toiled for, sought out long and diligently. Mighty geniuses, highly-gifted men, have been sent us from time to time, and have left us great and glorious thoughts, high and ennobling themes. Some have poured out their souls in all the rich and varied melody of music; others have given godlike beauty to the human form, and have made the canvas and the marble but as slaves to perpetuate their gigantic powers; while, as centuries have rolled on, Nature has given birth to some far-seeing soul, who has unfolded in immortal verse the secret workings of the human mind, with all its complicated machinery of thought and feeling. In them lies the soul of the past; all that mankind has ever done or thought, lie embalmed in their records. "Such are thy works, O Genius! seeker of the stars. Thou pilest up buildings that shall outlive the pyramids; and the very leaf of the papyrus becomes a temple, stately with towers, round which the deluge of ages shall roar in vain."* Yes, Genius can never die:—

"How can he die, he who has left his soul
On the rich canvas or the breathing scroll?
When the last hue is from thy canvas fled,
Their memory gone—then, Genius, thou art dead!"

It must shine like the sun in our intellectual firmament, at once the glory and brightness of earth; but to the unthinking, unworking man,

* Bulwer.

Genius is dead; it awakes in his mind no thrill of enthusiasm,—there is no cord within him that vibrates in harmonious thought with its inspired notes. No,—as the traveller can know but little of the beauties of a country unless he toil up its mountains, so it is only to the sincere disciple—to the man who seeks for her rich, deep thoughts—who ponders over her words, so pregnant with meaning—that Genius reveals herself; and then, at length, the magnificent prospect bursts upon his mind, and repays a hundredfold the toilsome path that has led him thither.

And if you would master the difficulties of your profession, and enjoy the triumphs it bestows upon its favoured sons, you must manfully climb its summits, and struggle up its intricate paths. If you falter in your course, and waver in your efforts, a life of mortification awaits you, and a fearful responsibility hangs around you.

It has sometimes forced itself upon my mind, that when the poet DANTE takes us down into the infernal regions, and displays the wondrous fertility of his inventive genius by his graphic pictures of the tortured inmates of those gloomy caverns, there is yet another portrait he might have drawn, in which the refinement of mental torture would have been at least equal to anything he has sketched. The victim should be a member of our profession, who has neglected his early medical education.

Nature should have given him conscientious feelings and a benevolent heart, and circumstances should have thrust him into a position of importance and responsibility. He would painfully feel, day by day, his inadequacy for the task allotted to him. The patronage of partial and sanguine friends, so valuable to many, would be a curse to him; living mementoes of his unskilfulness would beset his path, and the dying and the dead would perhaps sometimes haunt his memory. In the hour of difficulty and danger, when a judgment clear to discern and prompt to act is required, he would stand doubting and wretched, with no resources of his own to fall back upon, afraid to whisper his ignorance to another—nay, even to himself; he would feel, at last, as if he had the mark of CAIN upon him, and his curse around him: there would be no spot whereon to rest his unstrung mind—the past would be filled with painful recollections, the future with gloomy forebodings, and his life would be one mournful detail of unavailing regret and hopeless remorse. But the picture I have drawn must ever be rare, because those better feelings of our nature, which would render such a man's existence so painful, would in most cases excite him either to master his profession or to abandon it.

But I fear there is yet another case with which every teacher is but too familiar, and one not less painful to contemplate. How often do we see a

student allow the all-precious period of his pupilage to steal on in utter listlessness; nothing that is practical and useful is acquired; opportunities that can never return are lost; the empty, unsatisfying pleasures of the metropolis are permitted to engross the attention, and unfit the mind for thought and labour; and suddenly, and almost unexpectedly, the time arrives for appearing before the examining boards. Anxious and sanguine friends are impatiently expecting the examination to be passed with flying colours. What is to be done? The mind is empty; the soil is barren; no healthy tree of medical knowledge can be made to grow up at once; ere it can yield good fruit, it must have taken deep root in scientific ground, and have been watered by careful study. What, then, again I ask, is to be done? Some morbid growth must be forced up in the hot-bed of the grinder; the man must be crammed for the occasion; and if he can succeed in passing off this fungus for a genuine tree, and in persuading the examining bodies that he is qualified to practise his profession, he thinks all is accomplished; he enters practice ignorant, but self-satisfied; he substitutes the schemes of trade for the liberality of the profession; he apes the external aspect of the medical man, without possessing his merits; empty himself, he despises the qualifications of others, and would endeavour to drag all down to his own wretched standard. He

thus degrades the body to which he belongs, and has drawn down the merited satire of the wits of all ages. It was of such a man that the poet CRABBE drew the following severe sketch:—

“Anon a figure enters, quaintly neat,
 All pride and business, bustle and conceit;
 He bids the gazing crowd around him fly,
 And carries fate and physic in his eye—
 A potent quack, long versed in human ills,
 Who first insults the victim whom he kills,
 Whose murderous hand a drowsy bench protect,
 And whose most tender mercy is neglect.”

And now, gentlemen, my pleasing task seems well-nigh accomplished. I have endeavoured to give you some faint insight into the nature of your preliminary medical education; I have, further, shown you that you must rather seek your rewards in the resources of your science, and in the widespread and salutary influence you exert over mankind, than in the mere pecuniary result of your labours; in addition to this, it has been my object to prove, that whilst our profession gives abundant scope for the display of the most varied physical and mental powers, it gives to the character health and vigour; and lastly, I have impressed upon you the imperative necessity of pursuing it with unflinching ardour. But perhaps it will be thought by some of those who have borne much of the heat and burden of the day, by the veterans in our art,

that I have drawn my picture rather with the high colouring of young enthusiasm than with the mature truthfulness and judgment of experience; that I have passed over too lightly many of its trials and discouragements, and have given to its aims and achievements too ambitious a view. True it is that Nature reaps not a rich harvest from the brain until she has ploughed the brow and cheek with deep furrows; true it is there is much in our profession to wear down the frame and exhaust the powers, but still

“The time-worn cottage, batter’d and decay’d,
 Lets in new light through chinks which time has made.”

Mental discipline begets mental and moral vigour; the oyster, when broken, repairs its shell with pearl, and the man comes forth from the toils of an arduous profession a wiser and a better being. And if I have raised the standard of my profession too high,—if I have been guided rather by my hopes for the future than by my experience of the past, it has been my wish and aim to excite the young and aspiring students whom I see around me, to realize greater results and prouder destinies than have yet been accomplished.

There are those who delight to summon up before their creative fancy the inhabitants of former times, and to dwell amid the customs and modes of thought of a bygone age; but if imagination be allowed to

spread its wings, I would rather soar onwards into the future. Movement and progress seem to be the great laws that pervade the universe; and who shall venture to give to science her boundaries, or set limits to the achievements of human genius? Do we not already see the elements and forces of Nature chained down and made subservient to the will of man? Pictures are painted for him by the sun: manual labour is accomplished, and distance is well-nigh annihilated by steam, and his thoughts are transmitted from town to town with the rapidity of lightning; and is it too presumptuous to imagine that these wonderful physical results of human energy are but as so many bright heralds to announce man's future triumphs in the intellectual and moral world? Already we may see the dawning of a better era. Man is beginning to learn how much of mental and physical suffering is the consequence of the infringement of some natural or moral law, and from this germ will spring up results fruitful with blessing and happiness to humanity.

It is a proud thing to reflect that our profession will be in the very vanguard of this onward march. It will be its high function to expound more fully than has ever yet been done the laws by which health of mind and body are to be preserved. As the clockwork of this world moves on, it will be the sun-dial to regulate and direct its course. The

clouds of doubt and error which now encompass it will then have been dispelled by the glorious light of science, which, bursting forth from our profession, shall irradiate throughout the world, and shall be reflected back again with tenfold brightness on its own honoured head,—

“As some tall cliff, that lifts its awful form,
Swells from the vale, and midway leaves the storm,
Though round its breast the rolling clouds are spread,
Eternal sunshine settles on its head.”